

Amendment to the specification:

Please replace the Abstract with the following new Abstract.

Spinal rod approximator for seating a stabilizing rod in a rod-receiving portion of a spinal implant and inserting a closure mechanism is provided. In one embodiment, a spinal rod approximator is provided including a body with gripping branches, inserter shaft, threaded collar, and outer sleeve. The cylindrical outer sleeve is disposed about the distal end portion of the body and is movable between a first position and a second position in which the outer sleeve inhibits separation of the gripping branches.